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The President's Daily Brief

August 24, 1976

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LATE INFORMATION ON KOREAN SITUATION

North Korea has responded positively to the UN Command's request for another meeting of the armistice commission. The UN Command had asked for a meeting today. North Korea proposed a meeting for tomorrow, and the UN Command accepted.

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LEBANON: *The site and agenda of the Arab League summit conference being promoted by Saudi Arabia and Egypt to discuss Lebanon have become points of contention.*

The Syrians, following their agreement to attend, and the Lebanese have let it be known that they want the summit to be held somewhere other than Cairo, preferably in Saudi Arabia. The Syrians are also likely to press, at least initially, for a discussion on the second Sinai accord, which Damascus contends caused the Lebanese civil war.

Beirut yesterday was subjected to another day of heavy artillery bombardment by both sides, and Christian forces continued to shell the outskirts of Tripoli in what the Palestinians claim is preparation for a major assault on that port city. The threatened Christian offensive against Palestinian-leftist strongpoints in the mountains east of Beirut still has not materialized.

Thus far, there has been little adverse reaction by either the Palestinians or Lebanese leftists to the special US diplomatic mission sent to talk with Christian leaders this week in Juniyah.

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KOREA: *For the third consecutive day, the situation along the Demilitarized Zone remains quiet.*

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Pyongyang's public commentary continues to play on the theme that war could break out at any time, but its propaganda treatment does not seem now to be as sharply focused on last week's incident.

Moscow's desire to maintain its distance from North Korea's behavior last week is evident in the sparse coverage the incident is getting in Soviet media.

Pravda has carried two brief items noting the buildup of US forces, but Soviet media have yet to replay any of the North Korean accounts of what happened on August 18. One Soviet diplomat in Tokyo, who may have been speaking without instructions, told a US embassy officer that the incident was "highly unfortunate."

The Chinese, who for some time have favored maintaining the status quo on the Korean peninsula, also are playing down the situation.

Peking still has not commented directly on the melee, its only media attention so far being a replay of Pyongyang's official account of the incident. At least one Chinese unit near the North Korean border is on low-level alert. Nevertheless, China clearly does not wish to contribute to any heightened tension in Korea.

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TURKEY-GREECE: *Prime Minister Demirel is making an issue of Greek fortification of islands near the Turkish coast, apparently to counter Athens' objections to Turkey's exploration of disputed areas of the continental shelf.*

In a statement last week, Demirel rejected Athens' claim that it has a right to fortify the islands. In an interview yesterday, Demirel implied that unless the islands were demilitarized their status would be open to question since they were accorded to Greece on the condition they would remain demilitarized.

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The Greeks are unlikely to budge on the question, having argued that the right to self-defense is overriding.

The research ship Sismik's return to port yesterday decreases the possibility of an incident during the Greek air exercise scheduled for Thursday near the area where the ship has been operating.

Demirel indicated last week that the Sismik may stay in port for six or seven days before departing for the fourth phase of its voyage. Although it purportedly will take on more sophisticated equipment, the ship probably will undergo extensive repairs.

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USSR:

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IRAN-USSR: *The Shah of Iran told the US ambassador Sunday that he has received an eight-page message from the Soviet Union criticizing Iran's arms purchases. The Shah characterized the document as consisting of "sermons and admonitions."*

The Shah expressed puzzlement that Moscow seemed most concerned with Iran's program to expand its navy. He surmised that the USSR did not want Iran to develop a blue-water navy that might play a role in Indian Ocean affairs.

Moscow's concern with the influx of Western--particularly US--arms and advisers into Iran is not new. Only last month Prime Minister Kosygin reportedly admonished Iran's Prime Minister Hoveyda about arms purchases during the latter's brief stop-over in Moscow. The Soviet press has treated the subject with greater frequency this month.

Iran has taken little account of these signals. If anything, the Shah has probably increased Soviet displeasure by allowing the Iranian press to criticize Moscow with uncharacteristic directness for Soviet actions in Africa and the Indian Ocean.

Although the two countries maintain a substantial and mutually beneficial economic relationship, which neither side will be inclined to jeopardize, Iranian-Soviet relations have cooled during the past year over a variety of foreign policy issues, including Tehran's arms buildup.

The Shah may see advantages in dramatizing these problems to US officials. He has in recent months often expressed doubt about the US resolve to stand up to the Soviet Union or to stand by allies such as Iran. By emphasizing the pressure put on Iran by Moscow,

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the Shah may hope to reduce criticism of his policies in the West and to elicit assurances of support from Washington.

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NOTES

The two Soviet cosmonauts aboard the Salyut 5 space station apparently are preparing for an emergency return today in their Soyuz 21 vehicle.

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The earliest opportunity for a return to earth occurs at about 11:00 am EDT today. [redacted] 50X1

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An estimated 70 to 80 percent of the 200,000 industrial workers in Soweto, South Africa, took part in a work stoppage yesterday.

Black student militants apparently coerced many workers to participate by threatening to burn their homes.

Tough speeches by government spokesmen in recent days suggest that Prime Minister Vorster's basic approach to student unrest remains one of firmness with only limited concessions to urban blacks.

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